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MAILED

JUL 13 2010

In re Application of
Whitmore
Application No. 10/769,119
Filed: 30 January, 2004
Attorney Docket No. PW-001

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

DECISION

This is a decision on the papers considered as petition filed on 21 June, 2010, for revival of an application abandoned due to unavoidable delay pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).

NOTES:

The application went abandoned for failure to reply to a Requirement for Restriction, an oversight, Petitioner avers, as a result of severe illness.

Petitioner is asked to provide with any renewed petition a chronology of events—with supporting documentation—commencing with the due date of the reply (set forth below) until the filing of a grantable petition.

Petitioner is cautioned to redact personal information e.g., (medical record number(s), social security number, bank/card account numbers and the like) from documents submitted in support of the showing of unavoidable delay.

The petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

**As to Allegation of
Unavoidable Delay**

The requirements of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) are the petition and fee therefor, a reply, a proper showing of unavoidable delay under the regulation, and, where applicable, a terminal disclaimer and fee.

Petitioner does not appear to have satisfied the showing requirements (as to unavoidable delay) under the rule.

Petitioners' attentions always are directed to the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c) as to the showing regarding unavoidable delay and a petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).

BACKGROUND

The record reflects as follows:

Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the Requirement for Restriction mailed on 6 February, 2007, with reply due absent extension of time on or before 6 March, 2007.

The application went abandoned after midnight 6 March, 2007.

The Office mailed a Notice of Abandonment on 16 August, 2007.

On 21 June, 2010, Petitioner filed, *inter alia*, a petition with fee, averring unavoidable delay pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a), with insufficient showing and a reply in the form of an Election. Petitioner's averment is that he was severely ill and could not reply. As indicated above, Petitioner is asked to provide with any renewed petition a chronology—with supporting documentation—commencing with the due date of the reply (set forth above) until the filing of a grantable petition.

Petitioner is cautioned to redact personal information (medical record number(s), social security number, bank/card account numbers and the like) from documents submitted in support of the showing of unavoidable delay.

Petitioners' attentions always are directed to the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c) as to the showing regarding unavoidable delay and a petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).

In the absence of documentary support for his averments Petitioner will not be able to satisfy the requirements of a petition averring unavoidable delay pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a). Petitioners' attentions always are directed to the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(II) for the showing required pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a), which provides in pertinent part:

...Unavoidable Delay

As discussed above, "unavoidable" delay is the epitome of "unintentional" delay. Thus, an intentional delay precludes revival under 37 C.F.R. §137(a) ("unavoidable" delay) or 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) ("unintentional" delay). See Maladague, 10 USPQ2d at 1478.

Decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.

In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912) (quoting Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 667-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

A delay resulting from an error (e.g., a docketing error) on the part of an employee in the performance of a clerical function may provide the basis for a showing of "unavoidable" delay, provided it is shown that:

(A)the error was the cause of the delay at issue;

(B)there was in place a business routine for performing the clerical function that could reasonably be relied upon to avoid errors in its performance; and

(C)the employee was sufficiently trained and experienced with regard to the function and routine for its performance that reliance upon such employee represented the exercise of due care.

See In re Egbers, 6 USPQ2d 1869, 1872 (Comm'r Pat. 1988), rev'd on other grounds sub nom., Theodor Groz & Sohne & Ernst Bechert Nadelfabrik KG v. Quigg, 10 USPQ2d 1787 (D.D.C. 1988); In re Katrapat, 6 USPQ2d 1863, 1867-68 (Comm'r Pat. 1988). For example, where an application becomes abandoned as a consequence of a change of correspondence address (the Office action being mailed to the old, uncorrected address and failing to reach the applicant in sufficient time to permit a timely reply) an adequate showing of "unavoidable" delay will require a showing that due care was taken to adhere to the requirement for prompt notification in each concerned application of the change of address (see MPEP § 601.03), and must include an adequate showing that a

timely notification of the change of address was filed in the application concerned, and in a manner reasonably calculated to call attention to the fact that it was a notification of a change of address. The following do not constitute proper notification of a change in correspondence address:

- (A)the mere inclusion, in a paper filed in an application for another purpose, of an address differing from the previously provided correspondence address, without mention of the fact that an address change was being made;*
- (B)the notification on a paper listing plural applications as being affected (except as provided for under the Customer Number practice - see MPEP § 403); or*
- (C)the lack of notification, or belated notification, to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office of the change in correspondence address.*

Delay resulting from the lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP, however, does not constitute "unavoidable" delay. See Haines, 673 F. Supp. at 317, 5 USPQ2d at 1132; Vincent v. Mossinghoff, 230 USPQ 621, 624 (D.D.C. 1985); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (1891). For example, as 37 C.F.R. 1.116 and 1.135(b) are manifest that proceedings concerning an amendment after final rejection will not operate to avoid abandonment of the application in the absence of a timely and proper appeal, a delay is not "unavoidable" when the applicant simply permits the maximum extendable statutory period for reply to a final Office action to expire while awaiting a notice of allowance or other action.

Likewise, as a "reasonably prudent person" would file papers or fees in compliance with 37 C.F.R. §1.8 or §1.10 to ensure their timely filing in the USPTO, as well as preserve adequate evidence of such filing, a delay caused by an applicant's failure to file papers or fees in compliance with 37 C.F.R. §1.8 and §1.10 does not constitute "unavoidable" delay. See *Krahn*, 15 USPQ2d at 1825. Finally, a delay caused by an applicant's lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP is not rendered "unavoidable" due to: (A) the applicant's reliance upon oral advice from USPTO employees; or (B) the USPTO's failure to advise the applicant of any deficiency in sufficient time to permit the applicant to take corrective action. See *In re Sivertz*, 227 USPQ 255, 256 (Comm'r Pat. 1985).

35 U.S.C. §133 and §151 each require a showing that the "delay" was "unavoidable," which requires not only a showing that the delay which resulted in the abandonment of the application was unavoidable, but also a showing of unavoidable delay until the filing of a petition to revive. See *In re Application of Takao*, 17 USPQ2d 1155 (Comm'r Pat. 1990).

The burden of continuing the process of presenting a grantable petition in a timely manner likewise remains with the applicant until the applicant is informed that the peti-

tion is granted. *Id.* at 1158. Thus, an applicant seeking to revive an “unavoidably” abandoned application must cause a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) to be filed without delay (i.e., promptly upon becoming notified, or otherwise becoming aware, of the abandonment of the application).

An applicant who fails to file a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) “promptly” upon becoming notified, or otherwise becoming aware, of the abandonment of the application will not be able to show that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) was unavoidable. The removal of the language in 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) requiring that any petition thereunder be “promptly filed after the applicant is notified of, or otherwise becomes aware of, the abandonment” should **not** be viewed as: (A) permitting an applicant, upon becoming notified, or otherwise becoming aware, of the abandonment of the application, to delay the filing of a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a); or (B) changing (or modifying) the result in *In re Application of S*, 8 USPQ2d 1630 (Comm'r Pat. 1988), in which a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) was denied due to the applicant’s deliberate deferral in filing a petition under 37 C.F.R. § 1.137. An applicant who deliberately chooses to delay the filing of a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137 (as in *Application of S*, 8 USPQ2d at 1632) will not be able to show that “the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to [37 C.F.R. §1.137(a)] was unavoidable” or even make an appropriate statement that “the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to [37 C.F.R. §1.137(b)] was unintentional.”

The dismissal or denial of a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) does not preclude an applicant from obtaining relief pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1. §137(b) on the basis of unintentional delay (unless the decision dismissing or denying the petition under 37 C.F.R. 1.137(a) indicates otherwise). In such an instance, a petition under 37 C.F.R. 1.137(b) may be filed accompanied by the fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(m), the required reply, a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) was unintentional, and any terminal disclaimer required by 37 C.F.R. §1.137(c). Form PTO/SB/61 or PTO/SB/61PCT may be used to file a petition for revival of an unavoidably abandoned application.

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always are reminded that those registered to practice and all others who make representations before the Office **must** inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.¹

¹ See supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on Petitioner’s duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office).

The availability of applications and application papers online to applicants/practitioners who diligently associate their Customer Number with the respective application(s) now provides an applicant/practitioner on-demand information as to events/transactions in an application.

STATUTES, REGULATIONS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).

Decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.²

Again, Petitioners' attentions always are directed to the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I) and/or (II).

As to Allegations of Unavoidable Delay

The requirements under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) are the petition and fee therefor, a reply, a proper showing of ununavoidable delay under the regulation, and, where applicable, a terminal disclaimer and fee.

As of this writing Petitioner has failed to provide the required support under the regulations for the allegation of unavoidable delay.

² In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912)(quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is dismissed.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Should Petitioner wish to revive the application, Petitioner may wish to properly file a petition to the Commissioner requesting revival of an application abandoned due to unintentional delay under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b). (See:

http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/mpep/documents/0700_711_03_c.htm#sect711.03c)

A petition to revive on the grounds of unintentional delay must be filed promptly and such petition must be accompanied by the proper reply, the petition fee, a statement that "the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition was unintentional," and a terminal disclaimer and fee where appropriate. (The statement is in the form available online.)

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By Mail: Mail Stop PETITION
 Commissioner for Patents
 P. O. Box 1450
 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By hand: U. S. Patent and Trademark Office
 Customer Service Window, Mail Stop Petitions
 Randolph Building
 401 Dulany Street
 Alexandria, VA 22314

By facsimile: (571) 273-8300
 Attn: Office of Petitions

Telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214—it is noted, however, that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2³) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).

/John J. Gillon, Jr./

John J. Gillon, Jr.

Senior Attorney

Office of Petitions

³ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:

§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.